CONSTRUCTION OF THE "JOHN OXLEY"

Part 1

The John Oxley is a former pilot boat and lighthouse and buoy tender. She was built in Scotland in 1927 for the Queensland state government. The vessel was taken into the Royal Australian Navy during the Second World War. Returned to her duties after the war, *John Oxley* remained active until 1968, when her deteriorating condition made her unusable. In 1970 the ship was donated by the Queensland government to the Lady Hopetoun and Port Jackson Marine Steam Museum (now the Sydney Heritage Fleet) for preservation, but due to other projects, work was sidelined until 2004. As of 2014, the ship is still undergoing restoration at Rozelle Bay, Sydney.

More years ago than I care to remember I purchased a fibreglass hull of the vessel and also amassed a large number of photographs against a future project. It must have been in the mid 80's as I certainly didn't have a digital camera at the time.

The hull has seen the insides of many workshops, always staring down at me and wondering when something was going to happen! Late last year I determined to shelve anything that looked as though it had rigging and get on with some scratch building. Enter John Oxley.

The hull was quite reasonable except for the interior which was quite rough. This gave some problems in the region of the bulwarks and in theory these should have been thinned down considerably or perhaps removed entirely and rebuilt. I was concerned at the possibility of destroying the hull if I attempted this sort of chain saw surgery so elected to even off this area and line with thin plastic card. I also used plastic card to plate the exterior and used the dressmakers ponce wheel to create rivets. Scratch building is quite interesting as for the most part every piece has to be created and is not quite so repetitive as the plethora of period model ships available.

The photos below show the progress so far.

Work begins. Thinning down the bulwarks and the addition of two internal bulkheads. Do this work outdoors!

The hull also needed the addition of the distinctive stern tube bulge and the stern frame and rudder. Stern frame and rudder being positioned. Note also the stern tube fairing. For this I used plastic tubing and Milliput.

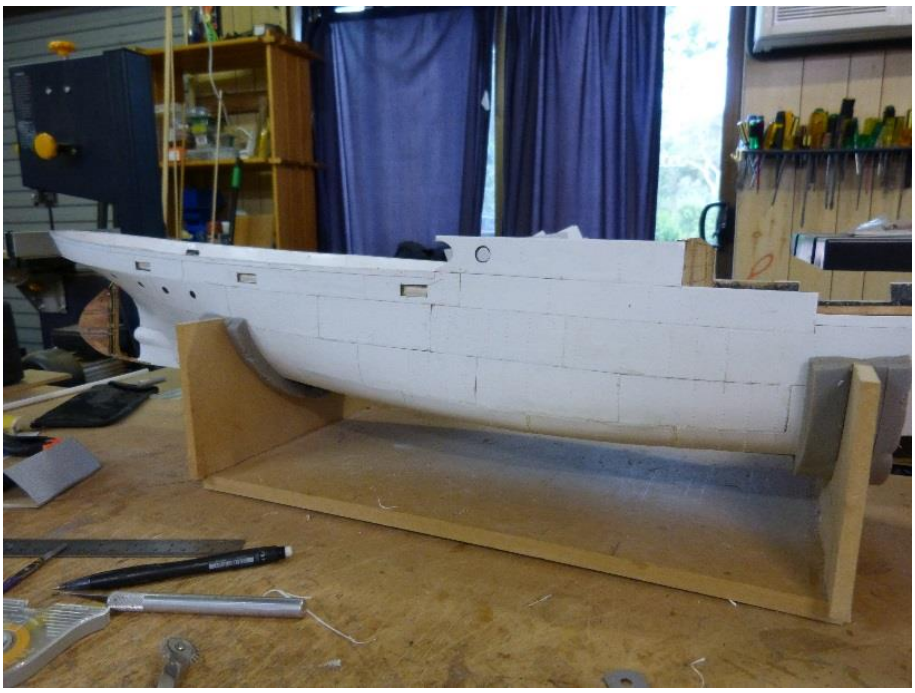
Openings were also cut for the cooling water inlets and the overboard discharges, including the freeing port openings at the main deck level.

It is also essential to mark the bulwark heights both externally and internally to get deck levels right. Failure to do so is subsequently problematic! (experience!).

At this stage I was working on small copies of plans and other information available on the John Oxley Restoration website.

The vessel also retrieved navigation markers in Moreton Bay for maintenance purposes so I elected to model the single hatch open and include a typical buoy in the finished model.

Note the extensive use of plastic card lining- still in the "pursuit of excellence" even if not wood!



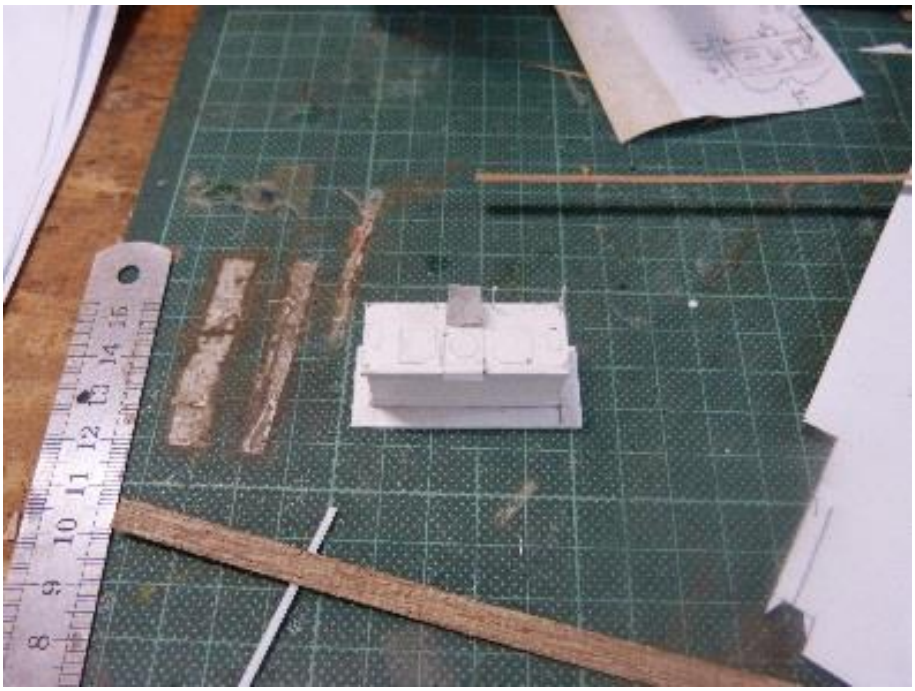
Hull plating is now completed, freeing ports added, stern frame fitted.

At this stage I was in possession of the proper plans for the vessel available from the Sydney Heritage Fleet and I thank John Phillips for his prompt attention to my needs, considering this was happening over the Christmas period. The portholes were punched out of the plating before adding to the hull. These could subsequently be drilled through the hull and portholes added. These were constructed by cutting pieces of an appropriate diameter from plastic tubing , adding a disc punched from clear sheet (anything you might buy which is contained in clear sheet will do) and filling the space with araldite.

Main deck hatch and coaming completed. The accommodation aft is a little complex and is made up from a series of ply bulkheads, again lined with plastic card. All portholes are punched out, drilled where required and portholes inserted.

In this photo, the upper deck has been cut out and the underside fitted with beams where these will be visible. The deck has not been fixed down as there is still a great amount of work to be done on the main deck aft. It simply gave me something else to do! The wood panelling is spotted gum veneer on a plastic card backing. This structure will house the chartroom and Masters cabin, the wheelhouse will go on top of this eventually. The funnel is a paper towel core covered with thin plastic card marked with rivets.

Two of the many ventilators. The cowls are made from thin copper sheet and the use of a dapping tool. Google it, I didn't know either!



The galley stove under construction .The galley will be visible in the finished model

Progress to date, obviously the vent and funnel are not yet permanently fixed.

That's it for part 1. Hopefully the model of the John Oxley will be completed in part 2.

Bob

9th March 2014